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SUBJ: NYT ARTICLE ON SOVIET USE OF GUINEA

1. FOLLOWING ARTICLE BY JOHN FINNEY APPEARED FRONT PAGE
NEW YORK TIMES THURSDAY, DECEMBER 6.

2. QUOTE THE SOVIET UNION HAS BEGUN FLYING MILITARY RECON-
NAISSANCE MISSIONS FROM THE WEST AFRICAN NATION OF GUINEA,
APPARENTLY TO MONITOR SHIP MOVEMENTS IN THE SOUTH ATLANTIC,
PENTAGON OFFICIALS REPORTED TODAY.

3. WITH THE ADDITION OF A STAGING BASE ON THE WEST COAST
OF AFRICA, MILITARY ANALYSTS SAY, THE SOVIET UNION IS NOW
ABLE TO COVER ALMOST THE ENTIRE ATLANTIC OCEAN WITH RE-
CONNAISSANCE PLANES.

4. THE EASTERN STRECHES OF THE NORTH ATLANTIC, AS FAR SOUTH
AS GIBRALTAR, ARE ROUTINELY COVERED BY SOVIET RECONNAISSANCE
FLIGHTS FROM THE NAVAL BASE AT MURMANSK IN NORTHERN RUSSIA.

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PERIODICALLY, THE SOVIET UNION HAS ALSO CONDUCTED RECON-

CAISSANCE FLIGHTS FROM CUBA COVERING THE WESTERN PART OF THE NORTH ATLANTIC.

5. IN WHAT SOME MILITARY OFFICIALS REGARD AS ANOTHER EXTENSION OF SOVIET MILITARY POWER INTO THE AFRICAN CONTINENT, TU-95'S--LONG-RANGE TURBOPROP PLANES USED FOR RECONNAISSANCE GUINEA IN RECENT WEEKS.

6. JUST WHY THE RUSSIANS SHOULD BE INTERESTED IN RECONNAISSANCE OVER THE SOUTH ATLANTIC IS NOT ENTIRELY CLEAR TO TO MILITARY OFFICIALS HERE SINCE THE UNITED STATES NAVY CONDUCTS FEW OPERATIONS IN THAT AREA.

7. ONE POSSIBLE EXPLANATION OFFERED IS THAT THE RUSSIANS ATTACH LONG-TERM STRATEGIC IMPORTANCE TO THE SOUTH ATLANTIC, WHICH IS BECOMING A CRITICAL SEA LANE IN AND OUT OF THE INDIAN OCEAN, BOTH FOR SUPER-TANKERS FROM THE PERSIAN GULF AREA AND FOR UNITED STATES NAVY SHIPS.

8. BOTH THE UNITED STATES AND THE SOVIET UNION OPERATE RECONNAISSANCE SATELLITES CAPABLE OF PICKING UP NAVAL FORMATIONS BUT THESE SATELLITES ARE OF LIMITED USE IN FOLLOWING DAY-TO-DAY SHIP MOVEMENTS, PARTLY BECAUSE OF THE PRE-ESTABLISHED NATURE OF SATELLITE ORBITS AND PARTLY BECAUSE CLOUDS SOMETIMES OBSCURE RECONNAISSANCE PHOTOGRAPHS. THE TWO NATIONS, THEREFORE, LARGELY DEPEND ON LAND-BASED PLANES AND SUBMARINES TO KEEP TRACK OF NAVAL MOVEMENTS.

9. TO PENTAGON OFFICIALS, PART OF THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE SOVIET MOVE INTO GUINEA IS THE ATTEMPT TO EXTEND ITS RIGHTS TO USE CERTAIN FOREIGN BASES AT A TIME WHEN THE UNITED STATES IS UNDER POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC PRESSURE TO CUT BACK ON ITS OVERSEAS BASES.

10. THE SOVIET UNION AND GUINEA HAVE BEEN CLOSE SINCE 1958, WHEN GUINEA--THEN A FRENCH TERRITORY--REJECTED PARIS' PROPOSAL AND DECLARED INDEPENDENCE.

11. FRANCE CUT OFF ALL ECONOMIC AND ADMINISTRATIVE ASSISTANCE, LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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TANCE, AND THE CONAKRY GOVERNMENT, UNDER PRESIDENT SEKOU TOURE, A LEFTIST, TURNED TO THE SOVIET UNION FOR MILITARY AND ECONOMIC ASSISTANCE.

12. RELATIONS BETWEEN THE TWO COUNTRIES TO BE CLOSE, (SIC) AND BEGINNING IN 1970, WHEN GUINEA ASSERTED THAT SHE HAD BEEN INVADED BY A MERCENARY FORCE TRAINED IN PORTUGUESE GUINEA AND THE IVORY COAST, THE SOVIET UNION

HAS STATIONED A FEW VESSELS OFF THE GUINEAN COAST AS A PROTECTIVE GESTURE.

13. AS THE SOVIET UNION HAS EXTENDED ITS NAVAL POWER BEYOND ITS SHORES IN RECENT YEARS, IT HAS KEPT TRACK OF UNITED STATES NAVAL MOVEMENTS--TO THE POINT OF ASSIGNING SHIPS TO TRAIL AMERICAN VESSELS AT TIMES.

14. FOR EXAMPLE, WHEN A UNITED STATES NAVAL CARRIER FORCE MOVED INTO THE INDIAN OCEAN FROM THE WESTERN PACIFIC IN OCTOBER, TOWARD THE END OF THE MIDDLE EAST CRISIS, THE SOVIET UNION IMMEDIATELY ASSIGNED A MISSILE CRUISER, A MISSILE DESTROYER, TWO SUBMARINES AND SUPPORT SHIPS FROM ITS PACIFIC FLEET TO FOLLOW THE AMERICAN SHIPS.

15. THE SOVIET VESSELS HAVE REMAINED, BRINGING THEIR STRENGTH IN THE INDIAN OCEAN TO A HIGH OF 32 SHIPS, OF WHICH SOME 14 ARE COMBAT VESSELS. THE DEFENSE DEPARTMENT, WHICH HAS ANNOUNCED THAT THE UNITED STATES WOULD MAINTAIN A PRESENCE IN THE INDIAN OCEAN MORE REGULARLY IN THE FUTURE, IS MEANWHILE REPLACING ITS FIVE-SHIP TASK FORCE WITH ANOTHER CARRIER GROUP.

16. WITH THE UNITED STATES NAVAL CARRIER FLEET REDUCED TO 14 VESSELS AND SCHEDULED TO GO DOWN TO 13 WHEN THE HANCOCK RETURNS FROM THE INDIAN OCEAN TO BE DECOMMISSIONED, THE NAVY WILL BE HARD PRESSED TO MAINTAIN A REGULAR TASK FORCE IN THE INDIAN OCEAN, OFFICIALS SAY.

17. IN THE FUTURE, PRESUMABLY SOME CARRIERS WILL BE ASSIGNED FROM THE ATLANTIC FLEET, AND THE SOVIET UNION, WITH ITS RECONNAISSANCE FLIGHTS OVER THE SOUTH ATLANTIC, WOULD BE ABLE TO OBSERVE THE MOVEMENT OF THE AMERICAN LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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SHIPS INTO THE INDIAN OCEAN.

18. AMERICAN OFFICIALS SAY THAT WITH A COMPLEX OF OVERSEAS BASES FROM WHICH TO STAGE RECONNAISSANCE ABILITY IN BOTH THE ATLANTIC AND THE PACIFIC. (SIC)

19. IN THE INDIAN OCEAN, BOTH NATIONS ARE RESTRICTED BY THE LACK OF BASES. BUT A QUESTION BEING ASKED WITH SOME CONCERN IN NAVAL CIRCLES IS WHETHER THE RUSSIANS WERE GRANTED CERTAIN BASING PRIVILEGES IN INDIA IN THE RECENT MEETING OF LEONID I. BREZHNEV AND PRIME MINISTER INDIRA GANDHI. UNQTE.

20. DEPARTMENT PLANS DEFER EXPECTED PRESS QUESTIONS ON ARTICLE TO PENTAGON, WHICH IS STATED SOURCE OF INFORMATION.

ANY DOD COMMENT WILL BE FORWARDED IN SUBSEQUENT MESSAGE.
EMBASSY WELL AWARE THAT US PRESS FREE TO PUBLISH WHAT IT
SEES FIT, POINT WHICH HOPEFULLY WILL NOT BE LOST ON GOG.
DEPARTMENT WILL BE INTERESTED IN GOG REACTION. KISSINGER

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